

A New Quere,³

At this time seasonably to be considered, as we tender the advancement of TRUTH and PEACE.

Viz.

Whether it be fit, according to the Principles of true Religion, and State, to settle any Church-Government over the Kingdom hastily, or not; and with the Power commonly desired, in the hands of the Ministers.

By JOHN SALTMARSH, Preacher of the Word at Brasteed in Kent.

2 COR. 10. 8.

Our authority (which the Lord hath given for Instruction, and not for Destruction.)

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A Quære :

Whether it be fit, according to the Principles of true Religion, and State, to settle any Church-Government over the Kingdom hastily, or not ; and with the Power commonly desired, in the hands of the Ministers.

THe Rules laid down in the Word for practisall Obedience, are these in part ; Let every one be fully perswaded in his own minde, Rom. 14 5. Verſ. 23, and *whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*. Now the settling of any Government upon a people who are yet generally untaught in the nature and grounds of it, is to put upon the people the practice of that wherein it is impossible they can be fully perswaded in their mindes, and so either on a necessity of sin or misery.

2. There is great danger of bringing people under a Popish implicite Obedience, by forcing on a practice of that which they scarce know, or know but in part : And this is against the *National Covenant*, to side with any Principles of Popery : And we know it by experience, that the people have been ever devoted to any thing the State sets up ; all the disputes or conscience of the common people usually ending in this, Whether it be established by Law or no ; and going usually no higher nor further then a *Statute* or *Act of State* for their Religion.

3. *Christ Jesus* himself could as easily have settled his Gospel-Government by miracle, as any can now by a Civil power,

if there had been such a *primary* or *moral* necessity of establishing it so soon upon a people scarce enlightned for any part of it : But we see the contrary, first in himself, he taught *John* before him, and so the *Disciples* ; and the gifts of Government were not given till he ascended, and the *Model* for Government not brought forth but by degrees, and as the people fell in and were capable of the *Yoke*, and would more easily to the *Commandments of Christ* ; and whether or no, is yet a Question which some who have sit out the bates too, though not with me, who am fully assured of the power of order which the Apostle rejoyced to behold, though a power with as little *dominion* in Government as *tradition* in Worship.

See in M.
Colemans
Sermon.

4. We never read in the New Testament of a Gospel Government settled upon any that were not brought first to Gospel-obedience by the power of the Word and Spirit, which thousands of Congregations in this Kingdom are now. For as in *material* Buildings stone and timber are not to be clapt together without *hewing* and *squaring* ; so nor in the *ritual* : And whereas in the *Temple* there should neither *Ax* nor *Hammer* heard, because things were fitted beforehand and so laid together ; I question how this could be in our Congregations now : I believe there would be now more of *Ax* and the *Hammer* heard, then of the *building* seen.

5. We have found by experience, that the speedie settling of Government upon the Nation, hath made Reformation but a little root, save in the outward man, or formal Obedience, the reason was, Because they received not Reformation first by the power of the Word, but of the State, which went not deep into their Consciences, but they could part with it at a time upon a Law : Oh then, *Why do not days speak, and multitude of yeers teach knowledge* ?

6. It is against the nature of *Christs* description of himself, and against that suitability which he presses for, amongst such as should submit to his *Commandments* ; He shall *strive*, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the street. *Matth. 11. 19. My yoke is easie, and my burden light, Ma*

II. 29. *His Commandments are not grievous, 1 Joh. 5. 3. Neither do men put new Wine into old bottles.* All which cannot be fulfilled in the Parochial Congregations.

7. The more time for *trying the spirits*, and *proving all things*, there is lesse danger to that *Staté* of errings in things received and authorized, and of involving it self into the designs of Ecclesiastical power, then which nothing hath sooner broken the Civil power, as may be seen in Popish Kingdoms, and our late Prelatical. There can be no great danger in the not sudden incorporating the two powers: Since *Moses* is not alive to bring down the just *patern of the Tabernacle*, there may a new Star arise, which was not seen at first; which, if we shut up our selves too soon, while the *smoke* is in the *Temple*, cannot appear.

8. We have not yet any experiment of our new *Clergie*, who are many of them *branches* of the old *stock*, and so may weild the Government too much of the *Episcopal Faction*, as the *Samaritanes* did with the *Jewish Government*, because they were not natural *Jews*. It is not safe trusting a power too far into those hands. Our Brethren of *Scotland* have been more used to the way of *Presbytery*, and may better trust one another upon mutual experience, then we can yet.

9. We experience in part some remainders of *Prelacie* working in many, which shews a constitution not so clear nor pure as the disciples of *Christ* should have; then whether it be safe committing the power too suddenly: For though I question not but some may be like the *ten*, yet there are others like the *two brethren* who strove which should be *greatest*, till the Lord ended the difference, *It shall not be so amongst you*. We finde the hottest Controversie is now moved about Church-government; and there hath been most written and spoken this way, and in most violence: Now when the contention for power is so much, and the controversie streams most in Government, we may soon discern dispositions. Well, is it good parting with the stakes yet while there is such quarrelling for them, and when one party cannot but take it for an injury, if wholly given to the other? It is to be feared, there

is too much of man, because the Bias runs most in these times toward this one truth of Government, and many other are wholly set by, which might well be lookt upon with it; which if there were not a Principle in man more fitted for a truth of this kinde then any other, would not be: But every truth hath its age and season. This onely for caution.

10. There is no Religion established by State, but there is some proportion in the two Powers, and some compliencie betwixt the Civil and Ecclesiastical; so as the establishing the one, will draw with it some motions in the other: And we all see how hazardous it is to disinteresse any in the Civil part, even in Kingdoms that are more firm, as *France*, where the Protestants are partly allowed their Religion in pay for their Civil engagements; and so in other States. And sure I am, that State is most free, where the conscience is least straitned, where the Tares and the Wheat grow together till the harvest.

11. Our parties or dissenting Brethren being now together, and clasped by interest against the common enemy, this foundation of common unity is such as may draw in both affections and judgements, if not too suddenly determined into Hereticks and Schismatics: It is possible, while a controverſie is long suspended, and time given for conclusion of things, Opinions may be sooner at peace: A fire let alone, may die out under that Wood which stirred in would kindle it. *The Contentions of Brethren are like the strong bars of a Castle; and a Brother that is offended is harder to be won then a strong Citie, Prov. 18. 19.*

OBJECTIONS.



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OBJECTIONS.

I.

But the Temple was builded with all speed in Nehemiah's time; and therefore, &c. And Haggai calls to the building, Is it time? Hagg. 1.4,

Ans.

Yea, but the *material Patern* was more cleerly left and known then the *Gospel-paterns*: The other were more in the *letter*, and these more in the *Spirit*. Now there must be a *proving all things*, else there may be more haste then good speed; and the Temple may be built by a false *Patern* as well as a *true*, and then better no Building, then no right Cedar to build with. And there were *Prophets* then, who knew the *periods* of times, and could prophesie, as Haggai and Zechariah; but none so exactly now: and these knew both the *fashion* and the *time* for Building. Yet who ought not to hasten the Temple, if the Timber be ready, and if the *Apostles and Prophets* be there for a *foundation*, and *Jesus Christ* for *chief Corner-stone*? Ephes. 2.

Object. II.

But Vice, Heresies and Schisms will grow too fast.

Ans.

Ans.

So they might have done from *Johns* first mon to *Pauls* Epistles, and the sending of the rit; but yet you see there was no Government after, settled upon the people of God. And if *refies* stir up their Patrons against the State, Magistrate *bears not the sword in vain*. And if m transgressions, let the Magistrates be set on in ry place to quicken the Statutes; and Preach every where sent forth to publish the Gospel. what if *the Prince of Persia* withstand for a wh *truth* is otherwise armed from heaven: Tho *Satan* be in the wilderness with *Christ*, yet Cl shall conquer. It is the *Papists* and the *Prelats* lousies, to keep up their supposed truths, by pecting every thing that appears for an ene The Gospel dares walk abroad with boldnesse simplicity, when Traditions of men, like melancholy people, fear every thing they meet will them: For the Angel that comes down from h ven hath great power, and the earth is light with his glory, *Revel. 18. 1.*

FINIS.